

RCIA: SESSION THIRTY-ONE
Reception of Sacraments
Week: 22/05/23 – 28/05/23

Introduction:

- Jesus gave us the sacraments as channels of grace.
- Grace is the unmerited divine assistance given to human beings for their regeneration or sanctification.
- “There are *sacramental graces*, gifts proper to the different sacraments. There are furthermore *special graces*, also called *charisms*...”¹ Among charisms are the gift of miracles, the gift of tongues, the gifts of service, prophecy etc.
- “With regard to God, there is no strict right to any merit on the part of man. Between God and us there is an immeasurable inequality, for we have received everything from him, our Creator.”²
- The seven sacraments are usually grouped under three headings as dealt with below.

The Sacraments of Christian Initiation.

- The three sacraments of Christian Initiation are Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.
- “The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life.”³
- “The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit.”⁴
- Baptism imprints an indelible mark/character on the soul and as a result can only be received once.
- “Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ ...”⁵
- Like Baptism, Confirmation also imprints an indelible mark/character on the soul and for this reason can only be received once.

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2003.

² Ibid. No. 2007.

³ Ibid. No. 1212.

⁴ Ibid. No. 1279.

⁵ Ibid. No. 1316.

- “The Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church’s life, for in it Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving ...”⁶
- The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ’s Passover and it is Christ himself, through the ministry of the priest, who celebrates it.
- Anyone who desires to receive the Eucharist must be in a state of grace i.e. free from mortal sin.
- The Church obliges the faithful to receive the Eucharist at least once a year.
- The Church obliges the faithful to attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation.

The Sacraments of Healing

- There are two sacraments of healing: the sacrament of Penance and the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.
- The forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism is conferred by the sacrament of Penance.
- “The sacrament of Penance is a whole consisting in three actions of the penitent and the priest’s absolution. The penitent’s acts are repentance, confession or disclosure of sins to the priest, and the intention to make reparation and do works of reparation.”⁷
- All grave sins must be confessed and the confession of venial sins is highly recommended.
- “The sacrament of Anointing of the Sick has as its purpose the conferral of a special grace on the Christian experiencing the difficulties inherent in the condition of grave illness or old age.”⁸
- “The celebration of the Anointing of the Sick consists essentially in the anointing of the forehead and hands of the sick person (in the Roman rite) or of other parts of the body (in the Eastern rite), the anointing being accompanied by the liturgical prayer of the celebrant asking for the special grace of the sacrament.”⁹

⁶ Ibid. No. 1407.

⁷ Ibid. No. 1491.

⁸ Ibid. No. 1527.

⁹ Ibid. No. 1531.

The Sacraments at the Service of Communion

- There are two sacraments at the service of communion – Holy Orders and Matrimony.
- All of the faithful share in the priesthood of Christ. This is called the ‘common priesthood of the faithful’.
- “The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. The ordained ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching, divine worship and pastoral governance.”¹⁰
- The ordained ministry is conferred and exercised in three degrees – bishop, presbyter (priest) and deacon.
- The sacrament of Matrimony is ordered to the good of the couple as well as to the generation and education of children.
- “Marriage is based on the consent of the contracting parties, that is, on their will to give themselves, each to the other, mutually and definitively, in order to live a covenant of faithful and fruitful love.”¹¹
- The following are essential to marriage – unity, indissolubility and openness to fertility.

Gospel Reflection Sunday 28th May is Pentecost Sunday, Year A (Jn. 20:19-23).

The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute’s silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion. The following questions may be helpful: What does this mean to me? How does it make me feel? Do I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing? What images of

¹⁰ Ibid. No. 1592.

¹¹ Ibid. No. 1662.

God emerge for me? What do I think that God is saying in this text?
What impact does this have on my life?

GOSPEL READING

Reader: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with your spirit.

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Response: Glory to you, O Lord.

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. **J**esus came and stood among them. He said to them, '*Peace be with you*', and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled



with joy when they saw the **L**ord, and he said to them again,

*'Peace be with you. 'As the **F**ather sent me, so am I sending you.'*

After saying this he breathed on them and said:

*'Receive the **H**oly Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.'*

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

Response: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.